DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 262 PS 028 098

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TITLE An Integrated Early Childhood Curriculum: Moving from the "What" and the "How" to the "Why."
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 24p.; In: The Early Childhood Curriculum: Current Findings in Theory and Practice. Third Edition; see PS 028 086.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Childhood Needs; Developmentally Appropriate Practices; Early Childhood Education; Educational Philosophy; Educational Practices; Educational Principles; *Elementary School Curriculum; Family School Relationship; *Integrated Curriculum; Learning; *Preschool Curriculum; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS *Whole Child Approach

ABSTRACT

Usually considered a pedagogical plan, the term "curriculum" is linked with decisions regarding educational content and often with related instructional strategies. However, a curriculum for young children embodies more than the "what" and the "how" of children's learning experiences in early childhood settings. Based on the premise that contemporary interpretations of both an integrated curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices are inextricably linked, this chapter examines the relationship among the "what," the "how," and the "why" of an integrated curriculum designed for young children in a rapidly changing and challenging society. An integrated curriculum is defined as one nesting discrete educational goals and objectives within conceptually and experientially rich learning opportunities deemed socially relevant and responsive to children's developmental characteristics. The chapter begins with an overview of current understanding about young children as learners in particular sociocultural contexts, including changing views of competence. The chapter considers essential qualities of an early childhood curriculum as it might reflect this knowledge, and advocates for the inclusion of families and community members in the determination of curriculum goals and strategies. The chapter concludes with a call for a new version of an integrated curriculum that is both contagious and courageous, one that acknowledges: the abilities, interests, and rights of young children; the values, beliefs, and goals of families and community members; and the responsibilities of educators in a pluralistic democratic society. (Contains approximately 80 references.) (KB)

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CHAPTER 12

An Integrated Early Childhood Curriculum: Moving from the *What* and the *How* to the *Why*

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THE PERIOD of early childhood is a time of precious opportunity and vulnerability. As knowledge of young children's potentials has become more widely shared, discussions of the early childhood curriculum have become increasingly contested. Usually considered a pedagogical plan, the term *curriculum* is linked with decisions regarding educational content and, often, with related instructional strategies. And yet a curriculum for young children embodies much more than the *what* and the *how* of children's learning experiences in early childhood settings. What children learn depends on how we regard them and what we hope for them. How children learn also reflects our ideas about children's rights and capacities as individuals and members of social groups. How *well* children learn depends to a large degree on our ability to keep our knowledge about them and our hopes for them clear and in the forefront of our deliberations. As children of all ages spend an increasing number of hours away from their homes and families, discussions of curriculum turn into discussions about children's lives. This chapter examines the relationship among the *what*, the *how*, and the *why* of an integrated curriculum designed for young children in a rapidly changing and challenging society.

For early childhood educators, mention of an integrated curriculum typically invokes consideration of the interface between "the whole child" and what I will refer to here as "the whole story"—that is, the nesting of discrete educational goals and objectives within conceptually and experi-

PS 028098

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entially rich learning opportunities that are deemed socially relevant and responsive to children's developmental characteristics. This interpretation was apparent in discussions of progressive education beginning in the seventeenth century (Bagley, 1941), was revisited in reforms proposed by Rousseau, and remains central to contemporary interpretations of high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, 1995; New, 1992). The adjective *integrated* is consistently cited as a descriptor of curricular activities deemed developmentally appropriate for the diverse needs, interests, and abilities of most classrooms of children (Hart, Burts, & Charlesworth, 1997). The *integration* of content and method is considered virtually indispensable to curriculum planning that claims to respond to children's individual patterns of development (Krogh, 1997). And yet, in spite of the strong association between these two indicators of quality early childhood programs, the claim is also made that "developmentally appropriate practice is *not* a curriculum" (Brekedamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Vander Wilt & Monroe, 1998).

In contrast to these views, an underlying premise of this chapter is that contemporary interpretations of both an integrated curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices are inextricably linked. Each of these descriptors of early childhood programs reflects judgments about the nature of learning and development and the purposes of education. These judgments, in turn, influence the content, processes, and outcomes of children's learning. Building on this premise, the primary goal of the chapter is to propose an expanded interpretation of an integrated curriculum that is sufficiently dynamic to meet the responsibility inherent in teaching young children who will live most of their lives in a world adults can barely imagine.

In the following pages we revisit the two-pronged definition of an integrated curriculum, expanding on common understandings of "the whole child" and "the whole story" in a way that links them both to their cultural and ideological underpinnings. Following a necessarily brief overview of current understandings of young children as learners in particular sociocultural contexts, the second part of the chapter turns to a consideration of essential qualities of an early childhood curriculum as it might reflect this knowledge. This discussion expands on the definition of an integrated curriculum by advocating for the inclusion of families and community members in the determination of curriculum goals and strategies. The chapter concludes with a call for a new version of an integrated curriculum that is both *contagious and courageous*—one that acknowledges the abilities, interests, and rights of young children; the values, beliefs, and goals of families and community members; and the responsibilities of educators in a pluralistic democratic society.

MULTIPLE IMAGES OF "THE WHOLE CHILD"

Images of children have varied throughout history, across cultures, and within academic disciplines, in each case reflecting ideological presumptions and human experiences (Hwang, Lamb, & Sigel, 1996). Current theories of children's learning and development, influenced by a consortium of studies from the fields of anthropology, sociology, cultural psychology, and comparative child development, increasingly embrace this situated view of the child. The image of the child that has gained predominance in the Western developmental literature over the past decade is a far cry from the generic one described in previous years and is, rather, one of a child-developing-in-context (Rogoff, 1990). This image conveys increased understandings of children's competencies as learners who both influence and are influenced by the larger social and physical environment. Cumulatively, this body of research has contributed to an improved understanding of development as both an interpretive and collective process in which children actively participate in a social world full of culturally defined meaning and significance (Corsaro & Miller, 1992). This holistic and dynamic conception of development has also widened the observational lens through which children must be studied. Of particular importance in more fully comprehending "the whole child" is recognition of the child's membership in the multiple sociocultural contexts represented by the family, the community, and the larger society—each with its own set of interdependent characteristics.

How Do Children Learn?

Cultural practices in homes, schools, and neighborhoods serve as contexts for children's development (Goodnow, Miller, & Kessel, 1995); they also provide opportunities and content for children's learning. Research in these and other situated settings has contributed to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the sociocultural dynamics in children's learning and development (E. Forman, Minick, & Stone, 1993). The work of Jean Piaget, once associated with an almost exclusive emphasis on individual cognitive processes, is now aligned (e.g., DeVries, 1997) with Vygotskian perspectives (Bruner, 1996; Rogoff, 1990) in attesting to the power if not the primacy of social and cultural processes. For many in the field of cognitive psychology, "the important question to be asked is not whether the cognizing individual or the culture should be given priority in an analysis of learning, but what the interplay between them is" (Fosnot, 1996, p. 23). While much remains to be understood regarding this process, decades of brain research support the significant role of the envi-

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ronment in children's development by revealing the neurological flexibility of the young child in adapting to early experiences in ways that set the stage for subsequent learning (Newberger, 1997).

A recent interpretation of knowledge construction is that learning takes place through the child's active participation in, or *apprenticeship* to, the routines, rituals, and possibilities that are characteristic of these situated contexts—helping to set the table, celebrating a birthday, or writing a letter on a computer. In this perspective, learning and development proceed hand in hand and are "embedded in the context of social relationships" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 8). Through the process of *guided participation*, children's participation in social experiences and other normative activities is facilitated by others with more knowledge and expertise. What begin as shared understandings eventually become internalized knowledge, skills, and dispositions. While the concepts of apprenticeship and guided participation emphasize "the importance of tacit and routine arrangements of children's activities and their participation in skilled cultural activities *that are not conceived as instructional*" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 8; emphasis added), adults also create occasions and establish learning goals and expectations for children that correspond to the sociocultural tools and practices valued by the larger society.

Changing Concepts of Competence

Cross-cultural studies support the premise of cultural diversity in adult beliefs regarding children's needs and abilities as well as the educational experiences deemed appropriate for optimal development. These studies have also contributed to a growing appreciation of children's remarkable capacity to learn what is expected of them, especially when that learning corresponds to deeply held values associated with the larger sociocultural context. Numerous studies of parental behavior in diverse cultures have revealed cultural practices that elicit, if not require, behavior in young children that is inconsistent with dominant American expectations and is sometimes contrary to standard recommendations for optimal health and early development (Harkness & Super, 1996).

Other insights into young children's early learning capabilities come from nations that have long acknowledged a societal responsibility for young children through the near-universal provision of preschool and kindergarten education. As a result of formal and informal observations in such cultures, we now understand that some American perceptions of children's early capabilities may be just that—perceptions. Elsewhere—for example, in Japan—it is not regarded as unusual for 4-year-old children to develop the patience to complete complex origami patterns

(Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989), nor for 6-year-olds to be expected to assume the responsibility of classroom management (Lewis, 1995). Children from Reggio Emilia, Italy, demonstrate what would have previously (e.g., Goodenough, 1926) been regarded as precocious competencies if not advanced intellect in their work with clay and other graphic representational media (New, 1994). In each case, most young children learn the skills, understandings, and attitudes that are valued by their families, schools, and communities. Learning goals that appear inappropriate from one perspective are regarded as natural and/or desirable from another (New, 1997). Research on early intervention in other nations (Woodhead, 1996) confirms the premise of purposeful diversity in children's early childhood experiences, with distinct perceptions of optimal learning and development identified in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Cross-cultural studies are not the only source of challenges to prevailing beliefs and norms regarding children's learning potentials. Recent research conducted in the United States also suggests that young children have social and intellectual capabilities previously unrecognized. For example, the work of Corsaro and others has established the power of children's distinct peer culture (Corsaro, 1985; Corsaro & Eder, 1990) at the classroom level. This work has had a profound influence on our understanding of the richness of children's play as a context for children's development and as a source for adult intervention regarding children's social relations. More recent ethnographic classroom studies reveal distinct, stable, and enduring friendship groups of children as young as 2 years of age—each with its own locally constructed peer culture patterns—leading researchers to express the need for a multifaceted definition of social competence that varies across perspectives and across contexts (Fernie, Kantor, & Whaley, 1995; Kantor, Elgas, & Fernie, 1993). Young children not only engage in social practices that were previously assumed limited to older children; they also make judgments about their own behavior in ways that reflect a social conscience and an emotional awareness of the needs of others (Berman, 1997). There is little argument now among researchers of children's social competencies that preschoolers have the capacity to distinguish between hypothetical and actual transgressions (Smetana, Schlagman, & Adams, 1993); they have also been observed to adopt "justice and care orientations" to what might be regarded as moral dilemmas (Cassidy, Chu, & Dahlsgaard, 1997).

Research over the past decade has also contributed substantially to an increased appreciation of children's cognitive competencies and intellectual potentials, thanks to increasingly sophisticated brain research and more comprehensive research hypotheses. For example, we now have evidence of the emergence of core domains of thought that influence chil-

dren's reasoning about physical, psychological, and biological phenomena (Wellman & Inagaki, 1997). Documentation of children's sophisticated exploration of scientific concepts in Reggio Emilia is joined by other research documenting young children's abilities to actively engage in hypothesis generating and problem solving (G. Forman & Fyfe, 1998). Such research challenges previously held beliefs about the primacy of children's play as opposed to purposeful work as a means of promoting symbolic and representational thinking (New, 1998b); it has also led to a reassessment of previously held beliefs regarding developmental constraints on young children's abilities to comprehend and learn from the use of abstract concepts (Metz, 1995).

This enhanced view of children's learning potentials is not limited to typically developing children. Studies of young children with developmental disabilities conducted over the past decade have resulted in remarkably different views of such children's social competence and intellectual potentials, especially when they have the opportunity to learn with their typically developing peers (Mallory, 1998). High-quality inclusive and heterogeneous classrooms at the preschool and primary levels have created new contexts for children's development that have proved beneficial to diverse populations of young children, including those with cognitive and sensory impairments as well as emotional or behavioral disabilities (Falvey, 1995; Wolery & Wilbers, 1994). Collectively, the past decade of theoretical advances and empirical research on young children challenges previous beliefs of limitations assigned to the egocentric, preoperational, and/or "disabled" child.

And yet recognition of the young child's readiness to learn also includes, by definition, a vulnerability to early experiences, including both their presence and their absence. While some variation in children's learning and development is the result of purposeful choices made by parents and teachers as individuals and as members of diverse communities and cultures, other differences result from lack of opportunity or understanding. Within the United States, research has consistently demonstrated inequities in children's learning as a function of gender, cultural, and linguistic factors, as well as developmental characteristics. Such categorical variation in children's learning often reflects our society's continuing inequitable distribution of economic resources, and prejudicial and categorical school policies and programs; some differences in learning outcomes also result from a noncritical acceptance of expected variation in children's learning (New, in press). While contemporary educators continue to promote the democratic notion that diversity ought to be perceived as an asset rather than a liability (Mallory & New, 1994a), different perceptions of children often come complete with diverse sets of

adult expectations of and provisions for children's learning and development (New & Mallory, 1996). Thus discussions of "the whole child" must include *not only* an acknowledgment of the prevailing images of children within particular sociocultural contexts, *but also* the extent to which such contextualized images unfairly influence children's educational opportunities.

AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES: CHOICE TIME FOR THE GROWN-UPS

Much has been written about the implications of a transactional and contextualized theory of learning and development for educators of young children (Berk & Winsler, 1995), including those with special needs (Mallory & New, 1994b) and cultural and linguistic differences (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Without pretending to do justice to these and other more extensive reviews, principles of instruction that are consistent with this work may be summarized as follows:

- Children derive multiple benefits from opportunities to learn from and with one another.
- Motivation is higher when learning is personally meaningful and maximally challenging.
- Diverse populations of learners can contribute to the learning opportunities for both the more and the less capable among them.
- Children's play, problem-solving activities, and short- and long-term projects are effective means by which children can explore and represent their understandings of the larger social and physical environment.
- Children's learning can also be promoted through a variety of instructional strategies, assuming shared learning goals and reciprocal relationships.

These theoretically derived principles are consistent with many features typically ascribed to an integrated curriculum (New, 1992), which many continue to view as a methodological "answer to achieving coverage of the curriculum while also promoting meaningfulness" (Bredekamp, 1997, p. xvi). And yet the stance taken in this chapter is that discussions of an early childhood curriculum must move beyond those practical boundaries. Such an emphasis on the *how* of an early childhood curriculum begs the issue of both *content* and *intent*, each of which are central to decisions associated with the lives of young children.

What do we want for young children? In a previous review on this topic, I joined others in the field in advocating for an approach to early education "where the child rather than the subject is the unit of concern and measure" (New, 1992, p. 287). If, indeed, an early childhood education provides children with an opportunity to acquire skills and understandings that are "congruent with the requirements of the culture" (Bruner & Haste, 1987, p. 1), then a curriculum focus that is primarily child-centered is insufficient. Rather, an adequate response to the above question requires an inquiry into the needs, rights, and potentials of *children-in-context*, that is, as present and future citizens of a pluralistic democratic society. The integrated curriculum envisioned in this chapter emphasizes the necessity of making explicit connections between learning experiences in an educational environment and children's whole lives, including their experiences both inside and *outside* the classroom. In the process, this approach to curriculum has the potential to integrate adults and children, institutions and communities, and knowledge as well as dreams. What follows are four broadly defined qualities that might characterize an integrated curriculum that seriously acknowledges its responsibility to young children who are growing up in our pluralistic democratic society.

Inclusive of All Children and Connected to Their Lives

Contemporary theories of learning and instruction join the writings of John Dewey (1902, 1916, 1938) in emphasizing the importance of connecting curriculum content with the larger context in which the child lives. Current research supports this philosophical and theoretical premise, making clear that when children's learning in school is linked to their lives outside the classroom, their interests are multiplied and they often seek additional opportunities to pursue related activities. Research on children's emergent literacy, for example, reveals the value of "connected texts"—material that is related to something outside the pages of the book (Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman, & Hemphill, 1991). The quality of "connectedness" as a condition of an integrated curriculum means more, however, than in Florida studying orange groves and in Vermont, apple orchards. It also requires explicit acknowledgment of the diversity of the population in our pluralistic democratic society. Such an interpretation of curriculum regards the inclusion of children with cultural or developmental differences as an ethical imperative as well as a pedagogical strategy (Mallory & New, 1994a; New, 1998a).

These qualities of inclusion and connectedness entail more than accepting and embracing difference; they also require effective pedagogical

responses to those differences. This approach to an integrated curriculum therefore requires teachers to actively pay attention to differences in children's lives and lifestyles as a means of creating an inclusive classroom culture that is "spacious enough to incorporate what children construct together" (Genishi, Dyson, & Fassler, 1994, p. 265). Perhaps the biggest challenge in promoting competence in the skills and knowledge deemed critical by the larger culture for diverse populations of young children is to make sure that knowledge promoted by the school environment is perceived as useful to the children, not only in their everyday lives but also as a means of helping them in the future to gain access to opportunities and resources otherwise unavailable (Delpit, 1995). For children attempting to bridge two worlds, the role of the teacher is to encourage them to explore and express their own specialized knowledge (Phillips, 1994), even as they learn to value and develop diverse forms and sources of competence.

Such an interpretation of curriculum embraces the classroom environment as a place in which children can find traces of their past experiences as well as their current interests, plans, and activities. Such an environment would look less like a catalogue display of high-quality classroom furniture and more like a composite of elements drawn from the local culture or cultures. Such an environment, like those of Reggio Emilia's municipal preschools, has the ability to serve as both an educational and caring space that includes spaces for children's work-in-progress and for family members to enter into and feel welcome. This interpretation of an integrated curriculum emphasizes the need for connections and continuity among the children, their activities, and the multiple (home and school) contexts of their learning and development.

Challenging to Children and Adults

The American "obsession with self esteem" (Beane, 1991) has somehow been interpreted to mean that children should be given more opportunities to succeed than to fail and that perhaps it would be in their best interests if we don't ask too much of them. And yet, such a "culture of indulgence" (Damon, 1995) does little to contribute to children's education or to their sense of themselves as learners. It also does little to capitalize on the vast learning potentials of children described previously. An integrated curriculum that respects children's capacities and motivation to learn will be characterized by short- and long-term projects that *matter*—they don't just go on for no particular reason. Single-subject classroom activities will be selected that stretch children's imaginations and problem-solving capacities even as the problems themselves invite chil-

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dren to work hard together to find solutions. Such a curriculum entails a more sophisticated understanding of mastery motivation than has previously dominated the field, with recognition of both the social and intellectual properties of the problem or task that are essential to evoking the "I think I can!" response in young children (Hauser-Cram, 1998).

This interpretation of curriculum places a heavy emphasis on the role of teachers, who have the responsibility of helping children negotiate their learning goals and processes (G. Forman & Fyfe, 1998). This interpretation also requires that teachers provide children with multiple opportunities to learn from one another, to revisit their understandings, and to reflect critically on their own and each other's ideas. To insure that children are challenged may also require that teachers learn about subject matter of which they may have little prior knowledge or experience. Early childhood educators who often admit their reticence to incorporating science and technology into their curriculum will have to become more willing to expand upon their own incomplete understandings of these and other unfamiliar domains (New, 1998b).

This interpretation of a *challenging* integrated curriculum also requires that teachers see themselves as students of children's learning and development. Only then can teachers develop a curriculum that builds upon current understandings even as it facilitates new avenues of inquiry. This kind of knowledge about young children cannot be found in teachers' manuals, but, rather, comes from the hard work of daily observations, record keeping, and critical reflection (Drummond, 1994). The successful application of such knowledge in the form of curriculum goals and strategies requires teachers to develop an educational philosophy as well as a teaching repertoire that is responsive to the diverse learning styles and experiences of all of the children in their care.

Even as teachers develop new understandings of children's diverse needs, interests, and capabilities, they must also learn how to question their own beliefs about children, especially when those beliefs create obstacles to children's learning. The role that teachers assign themselves with respect to children's learning of subjects like mathematics is highly influenced by their beliefs about how children learn (Fennema, Franke, Carpenter, & Carey, 1993). Early childhood educators frequently share the view that such domains are best pursued by children through play and other child-initiated activities, eliminating the necessity for purposeful teacher involvement. Similarly, teacher interpretations of the significance of differences between children directly influence curriculum goals and strategies. Such beliefs support practices that include lesser expectations for girls to acquire computer skills or for special needs children to have academic goals on their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or for

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Head Start children to engage in practices that promote emergent literacies. Such uncritical perceptions of children's learning potentials lead to an implicit *acceptance* of disappointments in educational outcomes and mitigates the advantages otherwise associated with inclusive and heterogeneous classrooms. Such "deference to difference" (New, 1998a) also denies children the right to acquire essential skills and knowledge valued by the larger society.

Communal and Collaborative

In a presidential address to the Society for Research on Child Development, Robert Emde (1994) noted that "a sense of individuality, as well as a sense of communalism, is vital for functioning in a democratic society" (p. 724). Perhaps the most essential quality of an integrated curriculum is its communal and collaborative nature. An integrated curriculum such as that envisioned in this chapter can play a major role in contributing to the making of a classroom community for young children. Such a curriculum also has the potential to promote a coming together of parents and teachers, the school and the larger community based on the nurturing of collaborative and reciprocal relationships.

The concept of a classroom as a community relies heavily on children's developing abilities to move beyond a dependency on adults in their environment to establish interdependent relationships with one another. The value of children's social relations to their cognitive development and academic achievement has been well-acknowledged (e.g., Levine, 1993; New, 1992). Early childhood educators also now have access to a wealth of knowledge regarding the risks and the potentials of children's social relationships as they contribute to individual identities and a sense of belonging. Research on peer cultures (Kantor et al., 1993) and children's understandings of difference (Ramsey, 1998) as well as classroom narratives such as those by Vivian Paley (e.g., Paley, 1995) have established issues of inclusion, exclusion, and peer status as common themes in children's classroom lives. Although there was some question, a decade ago, about the risks associated with children's peer status (Parker & Asher, 1987), more recent research literature makes painfully clear the negative consequences to children who are consistently denied meaningful and respectful relationships with other children (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Concurrently, a growing body of research supports a move away from trying to teach unsuccessful children how to be successful and, rather, to helping *all* children learn to be more adaptable in social interactions, to read social cues, and to access the necessary cultural knowledge of specific groups (Dyson, 1993). The teacher's role in such social negotia-

tions is multiple and complex. Sometimes the teacher's contribution can be as simple as the provision of a "marker of affiliation" that allows others to perceive the excluded child as a new member of the group (Kantor et al., 1993). A more challenging interpretation of the teacher's role entails a change in attitude regarding children's conflicts, which might better be viewed as occasions for negotiation rather than prevention. While little research has actually been conducted on children's conflicts, much less on the role of adult involvement, teacher assistance in establishing intersubjectivity as a means of conflict resolution has both theoretical and empirical support (Goncu & Cannella, 1996). Long-term projects such as those that characterize classroom work in Reggio Emilia also serve as vehicles through which children develop conflict negotiation skills (New, 1998b).

Establishing communities of young children is not an easy task, given the emphasis on strong teacher-child relationships and conflict-free classrooms that characterize the U.S early childhood tradition (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989). And yet, the goal of developing collaborative relationships with adults is likely a far more problematic and challenging one for most early childhood educators. While few question the benefits of parent involvement in children's early education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995), the type of home–school relationship envisioned in this integrated curriculum goes beyond that typically associated with high-quality early childhood programs. This new version of parent involvement is manifest in ongoing discussions and negotiations regarding the real life of schools, including the nature and the content of the curriculum itself. *What do we want for our children? What do we know about them that will help us all to better teach them? How can teachers and parents support each other's roles in the children's development?* Responses to these questions reflect cultural values, social norms, and educational goals and, as such, require the full participation of all of those who care about and are involved in the lives of the children and the future of the community. And yet both parents and teachers cite numerous obstacles to effective partnerships, including different interpretations of parental versus professional expertise and a lack of administrative support for true parental engagement within the cultural context of schools. These concerns are exacerbated in settings characterized by ethnic, socioeconomic, and political differences regarding the aims and characteristics of high-quality early childhood programs. The importance of developing trust in such relationships is especially critical, and yet, as numerous parents and teachers acknowledge, it doesn't come easy (Drummond, 1994).

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to effective home–school relationships is teacher hesitation to invite controversy into discussions of the early

childhood curriculum, especially when the contributions are from groups already suspected of having alternative perspectives on how best to care *for and educate young children (King, 1998)*. And yet this type of discussion is essential to a curriculum that embraces the democratic principle of open participation in the negotiation of issues of public concern. This interpretation requires acknowledgment of the minimal role some adults play in children's early educational experiences. While the research literature continues to grow on the critical importance, for example, of male involvement in children's development (Lamb, 1997), men's presence is rare in early childhood programs (Levine, 1993). The feminization of the field of early childhood reflects more than the low status associated with child care; it also reflects age-old biases about men's abilities to respond to the particular needs of young children (Silin, 1995). The determination of educational goals and strategies within a pluralistic democracy requires just such an inclusive community of adults.

This version of an integrated curriculum envisions teachers in extensive networks of relationships outside those associated with children in the classroom, where issues of rights and responsibilities may well continue to be highly contested. This community of learners must also include other teachers, caregivers, and administrators. And yet one of the greatest obstacles to a more effective and equitable system of early childhood education (Kagan & Cohen, 1997) and the type of integrated curriculum envisioned in this chapter is the field's highly segregated nature. Only occasionally, for example, are infant–toddler caregivers routinely invited to share their observations of and concerns for young children with the preschool teachers in a community. Likewise, preschool and Head Start teachers are often disregarded by kindergarten teachers and frequently play little or no role in the transition process, much less the identification of appropriate curriculum goals and strategies. The contentious debates between kindergarten teachers and those responsible for the primary grades are almost a tradition in the field. This lack of collaboration within and between programs contributes to discontinuous experiences for young children and their families; it also makes it unlikely that substantive discussions can take place regarding the purposes and processes of high-quality early education. A truly integrated curriculum will actively develop, maintain, and utilize linkages between multiple programs that serve young children and their families.

Reggio Emilia's philosophy of education embraces the notion that schooling is a system of relations (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1998), with the quality of the program for children inextricably linked to the quality of the relationships among and between the adults. The three decades of work in that Italian community provide ample evidence that,

when adults work together to identify the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that they believe will best serve young children in their current and future lives, they contribute to the curriculum's developmental appropriateness even as they become a more collaborative and integrated community of adults (New, 1997). Other contemporary curriculum frameworks such as an emergent curriculum (Jones & Nimmo, 1994) also acknowledge the challenges and the rewards of working toward successful adult relationships on behalf of young children.

Courageous

The previously discussed qualities of an integrated curriculum—being inclusive and connected, challenging to young and old alike, communal and collaborative—all contribute to a curriculum's capacity to be contagious, that is, generative in the spreading of ideas and relationships. And yet these qualities are insufficient to enable a curriculum for young children to respond to the anticipated skills, attitudes, and knowledges essential for life in the twenty-first century. New interpretations of an early childhood curriculum must go beyond that of "curriculum is what happens" (Dittman, 1974) to envisioning an early childhood curriculum that represents *how things ought to be*. Such a curriculum requires that teachers promote educational goals and utilize educational strategies that acknowledge children's past, respond to their present, and hold promise for their future. This interpretation of an early childhood curriculum requires tremendous courage on the part of educators.

This approach to an early childhood curriculum places explicit emphasis on the need for professional integrity, in which teaching and moral perception go hand in hand. As teachers help children solve social and intellectual problems, as they respond to children's creative and emotional responses to classroom events, as they plan and implement projects that represent multiple learning opportunities for diverse learners, they are teaching young children powerful lessons in what knowledge is important, what behaviors are valued, and what sorts of relationships are essential to a safe and inclusive learning community. When adults are viewed as "recognizing and responding thoughtfully to the needs, interests, beliefs, values, and behavior of others" (Simpson & Garrison, 1996, p. 252), they serve as important models for children's own developing sense of what is right and wrong. A "curriculum" from this perspective includes not only what is being taught, but how and to what end.

This interpretation of curriculum necessitates a recognition that virtually *all* pedagogical decisions carry moral weight, including those required when teachers must balance their concern for accurate subject-

matter knowledge with concern for the students, including but not limited to their processes of learning. The courage associated with teacher decision-making is acknowledged in contemporary research on teachers' struggles over how to convey content knowledge—for example, in mathematics or social studies—while simultaneously respecting students' own thinking (Ball & Wilson, 1996). Courageous teachers are often asking of themselves, "When does it matter enough to set things straight?" Sometimes the right thing to do is to wait and see, giving primacy to children's rights to develop conceptual understandings through their involvement and participation in the problem-solving activity. In this sense, assessment strategies become a part of the curriculum, with their potential to serve as means of identifying learning possibilities rather than learning deficiencies (Drummond, 1994). Authentic forms of assessment, in turn, can be linked to subsequent curriculum plans and activities.

Teachers also require a certain amount of courage to directly intervene, especially when that intervention goes against the grain of traditional interpretations of developmentally appropriate practices. Vivian Paley (1994) describes her personal difficulties in taking on the sacred territory of children's free play by declaring, "You can't say you can't play." Acknowledging her own responsibility as an adult in a setting that was rife with rejection and ridicule, Paley drew upon her own ethics as well as her belief in young children's capacities to develop empathic relations to insist that they play in a manner that conveyed a respect for one another as human beings (Paley, 1994). In addition to helping children learn how to avoid rejecting one another, teachers must also help children understand rejection by adults. Lisa Delpitt (1995) and others have noted the critical need to teach children about adult prejudices so that they will better understand the need to learn new ways of talking and behaving as strategies for successful participation in diverse settings. Such a curriculum is more honest and helpful than one that simplistically teaches children "everyone is the same on the inside." It also requires a considerable amount of courage on the part of the teacher.

For a curriculum that integrates not only bodies of knowledge but also the consumers of such knowledge, perhaps the most difficult thing that teachers must learn to do is to *go public* with their understandings of and hopes for children. This form of advocacy requires that teachers become more skilled at observing and recording children's learning and more willing to share their findings with others, each of whom is likely to have his or her own set of opinions and understandings. The work of educators in Reggio Emilia has served as a catalyst for teachers to utilize various documentation strategies as a means of conveying their changing images of children to others. In spite of the growing popularity of this

observational strategy, U.S. teachers are often hesitant to display their observations of young children, explaining that they are "afraid that parents will see their mistakes" (Gorham & Nason, 1997, p. 23). Teacher avoidance of conflicts with parents and administrators, especially regarding known controversial topics, is understandable. And yet teacher advocacy for children in general and a classroom of children in particular is an essential component of the process of establishing fair, feasible, and relevant educational goals for diverse populations of young children. This process also requires that teachers learn how to listen to what others are observing and hoping for, and assume a negotiating role regarding the potentials and significance of children's learning. Through their work with parents and other educators, teachers can learn how to recognize and articulate their own prejudices and priorities; see the results of their own efforts as learners; and become more capable advocates for children.

CONCLUSION

The influence of cultural values, beliefs, and goals on children's development is now well established. Research in the United States and in other cultural contexts makes clear that children learn a great deal from the adults who care for them, not only as a result of direct instruction and other planned learning opportunities, but through the rites, rituals, and routines that are a part of daily living. Put another way, the manner in which young children are cared for and the social relationships they develop with adults and other children in early educational settings profoundly influence their developmental progress as well as the lessons they learn along the way. These experiences and their associated relationships, in turn, are informed by a larger set of values and beliefs associated with the surrounding sociocultural context. Such an interpretation of cultural practices as contexts for development not only makes culture come alive; it also challenges the very notion of a distinction between concepts of curriculum and developmentally appropriate practices.

This interpretation of culture practices also challenges the notion of culture as the status quo. Adults are not necessarily bound to the historic presumptions associated with diverse cultures but, rather, draw on selected traditions as they make choices about children's present lives and future opportunities. Throughout the history of early childhood education in the United States, parents and teachers have debated the *what* and the *how* of children's early experiences as these choices corresponded to

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changing conditions within the larger sociocultural context. Froebel's Gifts and Occupations, Montessori's daily living, Dewey's practical experiences—each of these approaches to early education included new and different interpretations of what children need most as determined by the risks and potentials found in the larger society.

Today, the major discussion in the field of early education continues to revolve around the question of what constitutes an appropriate curriculum for young children. A decade ago, the controversy centered on the competing advantages of an academic curriculum versus a more child-centered approach and teacher-directed versus child-initiated instruction. Professional responses to this debate were articulated in the first guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices (DAP; Bredekamp, 1987). By the middle of the decade, the DAP guidelines themselves were the source of controversy as a result of the "one size fits all" interpretation and the inadequate attention to diverse perspectives (Mallory & New, 1994a). The recently revised guidelines address many of the earlier criticisms (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997), and yet the controversy continues as parents, teachers, administrators, advocates, and other interested citizens vie for position in determining essential features of an early childhood curriculum.

And so, we close the twentieth century with many of the same questions that faced adults one hundred years ago. *What should children learn and how ought they best learn it?* Most would agree that schools should teach children how to do things that our culture values—that is, to read, to compute mathematical problems, to communicate effectively. And yet such a response in a pluralistic society such as the United States is much less simple than it might appear. What do we mean, after all, by the phrase "communicate effectively"? That all children should learn Spanish? Sign language? Computer skills? Discussions about curriculum (content *and* method) lack integrity if the discussants cannot also respond to these two related questions: *Who says so, and why?* The version of an integrated curriculum described in this chapter acknowledges the current controversies associated with such choices as listed. It also respects the critical need to justify decisions associated with educational imperatives. Indeed, this version of an early childhood curriculum includes, by definition, the need for adults to struggle aloud and together with such decisions, knowing that their choices create as well as preclude opportunities for children's current learning and future lives. Such a requirement not only makes adults more directly aware of their responsibilities for their own and each other's children; it also requires that adults learn how to work together on their behalf.

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This version of an integrated curriculum expects that children can benefit from working hard at learning together and that they deserve help in understanding what to *do* with what they know. Children living in a democratic society need to be provided with ample occasion *and need* to use their new skills and understandings to make a difference in their own circumstances or those of a friend or someone in the larger community. Such an educational aim requires a sense of self as a competent individual; it also requires a sense of membership in a group as a way to give meaning to a developing sense of responsibility. As children learn how to participate in a community of learners (that, in this version of an integrated curriculum, includes their parents as well as their teachers), they contribute to the quality of that community. They learn good citizenship by being treated and expected to act as citizens—with shared and individual rights, needs, and competencies. This integration of academic content with social cause is distinct from most multidisciplinary interpretations of a curriculum in which discrete skills and disciplinary knowledge remain central in the minds of the adults (Beane, 1997). Rather, this version of an integrated curriculum represents a convergence of forces and includes the context as part of the content and integrates the learners, the learning environment, and the learning process as a part of "the whole story." Such a curriculum reflects

- A belief in children's rights to learn about what is of interest to them in a manner that insures that they will also develop those skills and understandings that are critical to their participation in the larger society
- An acknowledgment of adult responsibility (parents *and* teachers) to negotiate for educational goals and strategies that reflect common ground among diverse points of view
- A respect for teachers' capacities to use what they are learning about children and what they believe in as catalysts for public conversations about the purposes of an early childhood education

As parents and teachers pool their respective observations and opinions to construct new understandings about children's needs, interests, and potentials, adult understandings of children's lives then become both the sources and the recipients of educational decisions. From this perspective, educational goals and teaching practices can do much more than reflect the broader culture (Bruner, 1996); they have the potential to contribute to the education of a new culture. Such an integrated curriculum is worthy of imposing on young children.

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